

Two By Two

Together for Better Series Week 2: 1/28/18
Mark 6:6b-13: The Calling of the First Disciples

Great to be back here in PBO! Missed you! For those of you who are new, I'm Alex and I'm one of the pastors here at Chatham Community Church

And we have two campuses in Chatham County, here in PBO and one up in Northern Chatham that meets at Woods Charter School

And I've been up at Woods for the past several weeks, so it's just great to be back here with y'all—really do love it here!

This whole two campuses thing has been new for all of us, and we're experimenting a little bit with how we do team-teaching

Let me tell you a little bit about how things unfolded this past fall and some tweaks we're making for this winter

Just about 11 months ago we opened this Pittsboro campus! Crazy to believe! We opened up here last March because we love Chatham County and we love PBO, amen?!!

Chatham Church has been the only contemporary non-denominational church in the whole county, so we were up in Northern Chatham but we wanted to open a campus further south to give more people more access to a church like this

Our vision and prayer is that we might open up a 3rd campus in 2020 in Siler City so that by 2020 just about all of Chatham County will be within 20 minutes driving distance of a contemporary non-denominational church

So we opened back in March with about 90 folks who came down from the Woods campus and we had what we felt like were very reasonable expectations for what a new church campus could expect in terms of growth in a small town--But those expectations have been blown away!

And so we started a second service this past fall here much earlier than we thought we'd need to

and Steve jumped in and we experimented with tag-teaming our speaking--I'd be at one campus for a few weeks and he'd be at the other, and then we'd switch, totally random in terms of which one of us was where

This for the most part worked very well all fall long and on the whole our community is super-adaptive and flexible and appreciates the change of pace from my break-neck speed to Steve's more thoughtful and careful approach! Thank you for your flexibility!

But there were a couple of drawbacks to this approach, the biggest one being that it was a challenge in terms of caring for people

For example, for people who were new, if there was a crisis or they wanted to talk to a pastor, which one was “their” pastor to contact? Obviously we’re both open to meeting with anyone, but having some uncertainty about that isn’t ideal

Also, sometimes folks just kind of disappear for a few weeks on Sunday mornings.

And I don’t always notice or see it because of course I can’t keep up with everyone

But occasionally I would think about someone who I hadn’t seen in a while and I’d check in with them to make sure that everything was okay, that they weren’t sick or anything, and they’d tell me that I’d just missed them the weeks that I’d been at the other campus.

So in terms of being able to keep up with folks, build ongoing relationships, switching back and forth had its challenges for both Steve and me to be able to keep up with folks

So we’ve decided to try something slightly different for the next couple of months where one of us will be the primary speaker at each campus.

That means 3 weeks out of 4 Steve is here and I’m at Woods and then on the 4th Sunday we switch. And on the Sundays where there’s a 5th Sunday, we’d do both the 4th and 5th Sunday at the other campus.

That’ll be for the next few months, until our next change! Earlier you heard the announcement that we’ve got a new Teaching Pastor coming

Last summer as things were growing here, I talked to Steve and gave him the option:

we originally hired him to as an executive pastor to work systems and structures and planting new campuses—which he has done extremely well, what’s happened here over the past 11 months is God’s work through his tremendous gifts.

AND He’s so freakishly talented, he’s also a great speaker.

So I said to him that the road forked here and he could move into the teaching pastor role where he continued to speak every week OR we could hire someone else to do that and he could go back to doing what we hired him to do

He’s decided to go back to systems and structures and planting so we’ve been looking for a new person to do our weekly teaching and work with small groups

You can meet him and his family in a couple of weeks when they come for the candidating weekend, details are in the bulletin

When that new person comes later this spring and over the summer, we’ll likely go BACK to a more even rotation at both campuses so that he can get to know both campuses and build relationships at both sites

So all of this is still a work in progress, thanks for your flexibility and adaptability. Let me know if you’ve got any questions, glad to talk further

This is our second part of a 3-part series called Together for Better

We're looking at different stories where Jesus is forging together a community in order to make a difference in this world, to serve a greater good and a greater purpose together

One of the revolutionary and counter-intuitive things that Jesus taught was that life was found not as we get more stuff but as we give more of ourselves away

And so each week of this series we're going to interview someone who is serving in some different corner of the church to have them share something of how serving has shaped them in positive and constructive ways

And then in a couple weeks, Feb. 4th, just like we talked about earlier, we're going to have our Connection Celebration

where we're going to invite anyone who hasn't found a place and who's been here longer than a few months to serve to explore where you might put the gifts God's given you to work

This week going to call up Adam and Melanie Long—Adam and Melanie have been serving as small group leaders here for the past couple of years together

- 1. You started your involvement here in a kind of unique way—you didn't start coming on Sunday mornings, you started with a small group! Can you tell everyone that story? How did you first get involved in a small group in the first place?**
- 2. After a while you were asked to lead a small group—was that something you were excited about or intimidated by or some mix of both? What was your initial reaction to that and what compelled you to do it?**
- 3. Is there a story or a couple of snapshots that for you really speaks to the heart of what's been great about your small group community? What do you love about your small group?**
- 4. How would you say that you've personally grown in your faith or just as people as you've been stretched in leading a small group?**

PRAY a blessing over the Longs and our small group leaders

A couple of weeks ago we talked about how everything's better when we're connected in with a healthy community

Today, we're going to talk about how Jesus seems to always builds those relationships and those communities with an eye towards making a difference in the world around him

If you've got a Bible, turn with me to Mark 6/no Bible:

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. 7 Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra shirt.10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Sometime around the year 2,000 I started taking seminary classes towards my Master's degree. I was working with a college campus ministry and every summer they'd host a couple of week-long intensive classes that you could choose from for seminary credit

And so I started taking one class a year, each summer chipping away towards the credits I needed for a Master's degree—no hurry

Then in 2010, a full decade after starting to accumulate classes, I started getting a little more serious about taking classes--taking a whopping TWO classes a year instead of just one while working full-time

And then in 2012, I came here to CCC, and I still, 12 years later, hadn't finished my degree
So I started getting much more serious, taking a whopping 3 classes a year!

Until finally, last May, 17 years after I started, I graduated! Here I am with my good college friend Marshall who only took 16 years to finish his degree!

Now this was kind of a maddening way to do seminary, but here's what I loved about it: I loved how I got to take what I was learning in the classroom and work with it in real-life, in real-time

Because there are some things that you can only learn by doing it, aren't there?
Have you ever experienced that?

Jesus and his disciples at this point have been together for a little while, hard to know exactly what the timelines are at this point

And they've SEEN Jesus do some amazing things! And they've LEARNED a whole lot from him, just by watching and listening

they've learned LOTS from him about God and about God's character, they've seen how Jesus treats people, they've learned something about how to pray

These are all good things they've learned just by watching Jesus

But Jesus knows that for every one of these lessons that his disciples can learn by watching, it's 100x more effective if they actually DO it, rather than just watch him do it

And so, even though the disciples still have a lot to learn, and even though they're likely to make mistakes, and even though it's going to be messy and even though it's not going to be perfect

Jesus sends them out to go and DO what they've seen him doing. Because in that DOING the disciples will learn more about Jesus and about walking in the Jesus way than they could simply by sitting and listening and watching.

Here this morning, we've got a wide range of spiritual engagement and interest: for some of you, faith has never really clicked, for others of you it was great at one point but you're in a flat or dull place, for others of us, we're in a healthy place and looking for ways to continue to grow

Here's what I want to suggest as we look at this passage: ***the only way to a genuine life of faith is going and doing***

Sometimes you kick-start, re-start, or deepen a genuine faith journey is by going. By doing.

Because there are some things you can only learn as you go and do. And there are some things that you can only move beyond theory about as you take a step of action

Is there something that you need to go and do in order to kick-start or re-start your faith journey? There's a Connection Celebration coming up on Feb. 4th, there's a mission trip to Honduras later this spring, there are other needs and opportunities all around

For some of you, NOT EVERYONE but for some of you, in this season, Jesus is saying, "GO! And watch how I'll meet in you totally and completely new ways that you can't learn anywhere or any way else."

Now Jesus is intentional about this whole sending thing and how he does it—he sends them out **two by two**

Of course, there were other options here, other configurations for how he could have sent out these disciples--let's talk about the **Triangle of Options** for this little sending expedition:

On one end, Jesus could have sent them out in a big pack **all together**—this would have appealed to many of our desires for **SAFETY**

Would have been safer and a little easier for them to travel as a big unit and for the more timid among them, they could have hidden a bit while others took the lead

For some of us, if we were among the 12, this is what we would have wished Jesus would have done!

At the other end, Jesus could have sent them out **SOLO**.

This would have been more **efficient** because you cover more ground, it would have also appealed to that little thing in us that wants to be the **hero**, “look what I’ve done all by myself”

And besides, some of us just prefer to operate solo, right? Some of you just want to be left alone to go and do a task, other people just slow you down or crowd your space!

Some of you would have much preferred to go it alone than have to manage working with someone else

But Jesus bypasses both of these options and he chooses **2x2 (Better)**. Because better is better.

Better is pushing the disciples to take real risks while still giving them real community. 2 x 2 not only pushes them to take risks in the tasks they’re given

It also pushes them to continue to learn how to be a part of the community that Jesus has been forging among the 12.

Have you ever gone a big road trip with a friend? It’s feast or famine, right? You either come back tighter than ever before or more annoyed with them than ever before!

Jesus wants them to not only do good work “out there” he also wants them to continue to grow in loving one another, deepening their friendships, together is better

As we talk about how ***sometimes the way to a genuine faith journey is by DOING***

But better is better, so who can you go with? Because 2x2 is better than either a group that you can hide behind or flying solo

Sometimes this is a literal partnering: the small group leaders I just interviewed, Adam and Melanie as a couple have stepped into small group leading together, that’s helped them to grow in their marriage together

Almost all of our serving teams are just that, serving teams, working together. MANY of you already serve in those teams

The opportunity is right there, but maybe for some of us we just need to pause just a beat and introduce ourselves to the person working next to us, get to know them a bit

Maybe pray together before we jump into setting up chairs or getting the food on the table or greeting the kids

That Honduras trip is a team, serving together, talk to anyone who went on that trip and they’ll tell you that going out in a small team really brought them together in amazing ways.

Sometimes that whole going and doing thing is something that only you can actually physically DO but others are cheering you on, praying for you, debriefing things with you, helping you to navigate it and think about it and process it

During seminary I'd be taking classes and trying to integrate things into my daily work here and I'd have a couple of friends who I'd debrief things with, talk about things with, share what I was learning who would encourage me and pray for me

Sometimes the way to a genuine faith journey is by DOING—but better is better, so who can you go with?

Would you pray that God might give you a second person to either physically go to work with you Or who might encourage you and pray for you as you go?

Because 2x2 is better than either the big blob where you can just sort of draft off of other people and hide

AND it's better than flying solo, which is more efficient but not as integrated and can often lead to issues like burn-out

And this whole 2x2 thing is crucial because of the restrictions Jesus puts on the disciples: **take nothing with you** he says—no extra cash or food or clothes!

Let's sum up the **pre-launch planning & instructions**:

1. **You've got each other**
2. **Borrowed authority**—it's Jesus's authority, but they're going to have some of it, they'll use his name and things will happen, things will change
3. **Take nothingd**: totally dependent on God's grace to provide somewhat important stuff like food!
4. **Be ready to be rejected**

That's it! And mostly what's emphasized here in the passage is that they're not to over-prepare or over-pack but travel light and watch and see how God will provide for you everywhere you go

There's, no Frequently Asked Questions sheet to help the disciples field the hardest questions that they might get on the road

There's no safety tips—look both ways before crossing the road, remember that some kids might have peanut allergies so don't hand out snacks that might have been cross-contaminated

They don't sign a waiver saying that they won't sue Jesus if they get thrown in jail or beat up or cursed at while going on HIS mission trip that was HIS big idea

And this whole thing of GOING IN PAIRS without a big plan, without a ton of reserves, without a lot of drilling and strategizing and mapping out every single detail

has something very important to teach us here in our community as we fight our own battles here spiritually and emotionally.

Last week at all of our services we invited people to leave behind things that would keep them from following Jesus into the future that he has for them

And we invited everyone who had something in mind to write it down on a notecard and then exchange that notecard for the communion elements

And this week as I've prayed over these notecards, asking God to help each of us actually leave this stuff behind and not just pick it back up like we so often do

The themes that get repeated over and over again are these related struggles of FEAR, WORRY, ANXIETY, and CONTROL, over and over and over again

These are the epidemics of our age and era, aren't they?

In my small group this past week, we were talking about this epidemic. Our struggles with worry and anxiety and control

And some of the people in my small group really like planning, really like preparation, really like to map everything out

nothing wrong with that, planning and preparation can be a holy thing!

But at some point what happens is you over-plan, over-prepare, over-fixate on all the details

You're constantly preparing and never actually going and doing. Preparing becomes an excuse, a convenient place to hide from the risk of going and doing

And as we looked at this story, we talked about how Jesus doesn't bother with a ton of details in the preparation stage—he really does just send them out so far as we can tell

AND THEN we talked about how they came back after a very successful trip—they preached, people got healed, they drove out demons, how cool is all that?

How do you think the disciples came back after a great few weeks on the road of seeing God show up and amazing things over and over and over again? They came back pumped!

They left Jesus 2x2 scared, anxious, worried, nervous

But they took that step, went to work, God showed up in amazing ways and they came back no longer scared but strong and courageous, ready for anything.

And in our small group we said, ***What if at some point the solution to your anxiety and my anxiety, the fix for your fear and my fear, the healing for your worry and my worry is not more preparation but more action in community?***

What if the next step for the places where your worried isn't trying to map it all out or figure it all out but to simply to pray, find a friend and then take the next step of action and see how God shows up, what he does

To feel the fear but not let the fear or worry dictate whether or not we take that next step

And not just action, but action in community, together. Because together matters all the more when we're anxious and worried

Several years ago I read about a scientific study where they stress-tested a single monkey in a cage with lights and buzzers and noises and whistles and then they measured his stress level

Then they put another monkey in the cage with him, did the exact same stress test, and his stress levels were cut in half

Having another monkey in it with him cut the monkey's stress level in half!

You need another monkey in it with you. Now it has to be the right monkey, the wrong monkey with you will just make you more stressed out!

But having the right monkey on the journey with you is part of how God wired us up to overcome the stressors of this life, even and especially the stressors of being sent out on his mission

My first two years I was here, I was the only employee of the church. And it was kind of a make-or-break time for the church, if things had not gone well my first few months this whole thing could have possibly folded

And man was I stressed out! We had so many great volunteers but I was the only one in the office, the only one whose full-time job it was to think about this

And then 2 years in, we hired Steve. And he was totally the right monkey to put in the cage with me! After a full work day on Sunday, I take Monday afternoons off

And I can still remember the first Monday that I left the office after our Monday morning meeting and Steve stayed there because he was taking Fridays off

and he was cranking away at all sorts of things and I felt this huge wash of relief over me that there was someone else that I got to partner with

Jesus sends them out 2x2 because better is better. 2x2 is better than drafting and hiding in a larger group of 12. Better than being efficient or being the hero being sent out one at a time

Jesus sends out scared and anxious disciples, two by two, because having the right monkey in the cage with you cuts our worries in half

And because sometimes the best way to overcome fear and anxiety is action in community, not more control or more preparation or making things just so.

And because just about always the best way to learn anything is to do it, not just see someone else do it.

So let's bring this altogether this way:

***Sometimes the way to a genuine faith journey
and to overcome fear or anxiety or control or worry
is by finding another monkey (because 2x2 is better)
and get going.***

***Because Jesus designed us to be together for better—better for us and better for the world
around us.***

Given that, here's **Today's Take-WITH:**

Where are you going? Who can you go with?